

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

VLR a/s/h  
NRHP 10/31/7

1. Name of Property

historic name Scrabble School  
other names/site number VDHR File Number: 078-5107

2. Location

street & number 111 Scrabble Road/Route 626 not for publication N/A  
city or town Castleton X vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Rappahannock code 157 zip code 22747

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide X locally    (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]

Signature of certifying official

Sept. 14, 2007

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria (    See continuation sheet for additional comments )

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register

   See continuation sheet.

   determined eligible for the National Register

   See continuation sheet.

   determined not eligible for the National Register

   removed from the National Register

   other (explain):   

Signature of the Keeper   

Date of Action

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## 5. Classification

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### Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply):

☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property (Check only one box):

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Rosenwald Schools in Virginia MPD

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

Cat: VACANT Sub: Not in Use

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions):

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENT; Craftsman

### Materials (Enter categories from instructions):

foundation: CONCRETE  
roof: METAL  
walls: WOOD: Weatherboard; STUCCO

### Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION, ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK; ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance** circa 1921-1957 (officially closed in 1968)

**Significant Dates** 1921-1922

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☒ Other State agency  
☒ Federal agency  
☒ Local government  
☒ University  
☒ Other

Name of repository: Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; University of Virginia Special Collections, Charlottesville, Virginia; Rappahannock County Courthouse, Washington, Virginia; Rappahannock County Historical Society, Washington, Virginia; Scrabble School Preservation Foundation, Washington, Virginia; Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia; Fisk University Special Collections, Nashville, Tennessee

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property:** 2.31 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet):

1. Zone: 17 Easting: 748296 Northing: 4274266 See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Jennifer Hallock, Architectural Historian organization Arcadia Preservation, LLC  
street & number P.O. Box 138 telephone 434.293.7772 date 5/10/07  
city or town Keswick state VA zip code 22947

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name County of Rappahannock Contact: County Administrator John McCarthy  
street & number P.O. Box 519 telephone 540-675-5330  
city or town Washington state VA zip code 22747

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

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**School**

**Scrabble**

**Virginia**

**Rappahannock County,**

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**SUMMARY ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

The Scrabble School, constructed in 1921-1922, is a one-story, wood-frame building clad in rough-cast stucco siding. Set on a solid, poured concrete foundation, the single-pile school is capped by a side-gabled, standing-seam metal roof and pierced with a central, double-leaf main entrance sheltered by a bracketed, shed-roofed overhang. The symmetrically fenestrated façade extends seven bays wide with three sets of large six-over-six wood windows, set in a 1/3/1 window pattern, flanking the main entry. The windows are currently boarded up. The façade also features overhanging eaves, a wood cornice, exposed rafter tails, and decorative corner brackets. Two central-interior brick chimneys rise from the roof. The interior presents an open plan with a central entry vestibule. The two rooms were divided by a central accordion barrier to allow them to become a single, large open space. The interior is detailed with three-inch-wide oak floorboards, beaded-board wainscoting with an ogee-molded cap, plaster walls, a beaded-board ceiling, and two single-leaf primary entries. Three small activity rooms are located along the entrance wall in each classroom, flanking the central entry. The design of the school follows the plans prescribed by the Julius Rosenwald Fund at the time of the school's construction.

**Site Description**

Scrabble School is located in rural Rappahannock County on the north side of Route 626 (111 Scrabble Road), approximately 6/10 of a mile from Route 522 (Sperryville Pike) in the small hamlet of Scrabble, near the village of Woodville. The school is sited on a partially overgrown rise, set slightly back from the road,

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facing southwest. Remnants of an unpaved driveway remain visible. An Existing Structure Report by Monroe and Crocker, P.C. in 2006 defines the vegetation surrounding the building as consisting primarily of ailanthus and yellow poplar trees, as well as Japanese knotweed and other scrub plants. Yucca plants from the original landscape design also remain visible. A septic system, privy remains, and a coal house/shed also remain on the site to the side and rear of the school.

**Detailed Architectural Description**

Constructed in 1921-1922, the Scrabble School was constructed as an African-American primary/elementary school (grades first through seventh) by the local community with partial funding from the nationally-acclaimed Julius Rosenwald Foundation. The stucco-clad, wood-frame building, set on a solid, poured concrete foundation, stands one story in height and measures seven bays in width. The school building is capped by a side-gabled, standing-seam metal roof with a central shed overhang marking the main entrance. The overhang is supported by decorative triangular brackets, representative of the Craftsman style. The entrance is composed of an open bay (the original double-leaf wood doors were removed) with a surround featuring a molded backband and lipped lintel. The entry, accessed by five concrete steps, opens to an interior vestibule with two separate single-leaf paneled classroom entrances. The façade is detailed with overhanging eaves, a flush wood cornice, exposed rafter tails, and six-over-six, double-hung, sash wood windows that have been boarded up. The symmetrical fenestration consists of a 1/3/1 window pattern flanking the central sheltered entrance. Stepped corner brackets lend an additional stylistic element to the primarily unadorned school. Two central-interior brick chimneys rise from the roof. Consisting of flush, rough-cast stucco walls, the side elevations are marked only with lancet-arched wood louvered vents in the gable peaks, each serving as a “breeze window.” These windows, which are detailed with a “y” pattern, provide the most decorative elements of the building’s exterior. The rear elevation of the school features a central one-story, wood-frame bathroom addition that was added in 1961. The addition displays weatherboard cladding and a gabled standing-seam metal roof. It is set on a concrete block foundation and features a side-elevation, single-leaf entry. Other details include a central-interior concrete block chimney,

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overhanging eaves, exposed rafters, and boarded window openings on the rear elevation. Flanking the addition, the rear elevation of the original school features banks of four, now boarded, six-over-six wood windows on the rear of the main block. The windows on this elevation provide natural lighting for the classroom spaces. Exposed rafter tails and a wood cornice further define the elevation.

**Interior Description**

The Scrabble School presents an open plan with a central entry vestibule and flanking activity rooms. Two separate classrooms were formed from the main open space via a central partition wall that once housed a moveable accordion barrier within the large framed opening. A wood surround with molded backband, a lipped lintel, and square base frame the opening, which spans almost the entire width of the room. The central vestibule accesses each side of the room, providing direct access to each classroom. This vestibule, reached from the exterior by double-leaf paneled wood doors (now removed), is detailed with three-inch-wide oak floors, beaded-board wainscoting with an ogee-molded cap, plaster walls, a beaded-board ceiling, and two single-leaf entries, opening to the classroom space. Each entry features a wood surround with molded-lip entablature, square surrounds, and square plinth blocks. The door surrounds are each 4 ¾-inches wide with an 8 ½-inch cap, and the wainscoting rises 49 ¼-inches in height throughout the school.

The interior space of the main room/classrooms features three small activity rooms on each southwest wall, flanking the vestibule and extending across the entire elevation, as stipulated in the Rosenwald-provided plans. These activity spaces were used as cloak rooms, lunch/activity rooms/offices, and wood/coal rooms, each housing the primary facade windows and featuring horizontal beaded-board wall cladding. A quarter-round shoe mold is present in these smaller rooms. Other detailing includes built-in coat hooks in the cloak rooms, double-blind roller shade remnants, original door hardware, and single-leaf five-panel wood doors. A scuttle ceiling door to the attic is located in the coal room. The room configuration was intentional, serving to block light from entering the classroom space from two directions. Stoves were used, both wood

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and coal burning, to heat the space. While now removed, the attachment locations remain visible on the southwest walls of both classrooms. The original 41-inch tall blackboards (slate now removed), detailed with a mitered wood frame and chalk tray, extend across the side elevation walls. A 15 ¾-inch bulletin board caps the chalkboard. The walls are further marked by beaded-board wainscoting, thin crown molding, plaster and lath walls, and a wood panel over the blackboard, accessing the breeze window. Each door and window opening features a wood surround with molded backband and lipped entablature except the two single-leaf entries to the ell, which feature square-edged wood surrounds, suggesting installation at a later date. The original windows each sit 39 ¼-inches off the floor, with a 4 ¾-inch –wide side surround, a ¼-inch sill, and a five-inch apron. The ceilings are constructed of beaded board with a thin ogee-shaped crown molding and the floors of three-inch oak boards. The original metal bell-shaped lights on chains remain in place.

In 1961, indoor plumbing was installed in the school with a bathroom addition added to the rear elevation, replacing the previous privies. A door from each classroom accesses the rear addition, each detailed with a square-edged wood surround with a 3 ¼-inch square lintel. Each of the two small bathrooms features a rear elevation window. The original exterior weatherboard siding is evident on the southwest wall of the hallway, which also features a ceiling hatch scuttle and a stove thimble. Other finishes in the addition include oak floorboards, square-edged surrounds, six-inch baseboards with an ogee cap, and some fixtures. Many of the finishes in this non-historic addition have been removed.

**Condition Assessment**

The Existing Structure Report states that the school's exterior remains in overall good condition, with some areas in need of varying degrees of repair. The report's general summary states that "Except for damaged window sash, salvaged building components and a few areas of water damage, the basic building structure seems to be in remarkably good condition considering the years of limited maintenance. We do not see any



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major structural or repair concerns for the proposed future use of the building except for the windows. Otherwise patch and repair in kind methods can be used as part of the general renovation of the structure.”<sup>1</sup>

**Outbuildings**

*Coal House/Shed, circa 1950, Contributing*

The one-story concrete block coal house/shed is capped by a shed, standing-seam metal roof. The two-room building is detailed with exposed rafter tails, an off-center single-leaf door, and a wood cornice. A small vertical-board window opening also pierces the façade, which faces southwest.

*(2)Septic System/Privy sites, circa 1922, Contributing*

There are two in-ground poured concrete septic tanks located to the rear of the school building. Each marks the location of the original boys’ and girls’ privies, no longer standing. Both sites are overgrown.

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<sup>1</sup> Monroe and Crocker, P.C. *Scrabble School Existing Structure Report*. May 2006, page 4.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Scrabble School, located at 111 Scrabble Road in Rappahannock County, Virginia, stands as a representative example of a Community School Plan Rosenwald School, a model school building built for the education of African-American children. Scrabble School, constructed in 1921-22, was the first of four Rosenwald schools constructed in Rappahannock County, Virginia between 1921 and 1928.

A Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) nomination (VDHR 012-5041) for *Rosenwald Schools in Virginia* was prepared by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and was listed on the National Register in 2003. The MPD provides a comprehensive study of Julius Rosenwald, the Rosenwald Fund, school plans, and a list of Virginia's Rosenwald buildings. This nomination is being created to dovetail with the program background provided in that study and will focus specifically on Rappahannock County and the Scrabble School. The property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Julius Rosenwald Fund program of African-American education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The school, the most intact example in Rappahannock County, is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an early Rosenwald Fund model school building, specifically designed according to a Community School plan. As specified by the MPD, Scrabble School retains a high degree of architectural integrity in design, floorplan, workmanship, and materials, including intact fenestration and modest stylistic Craftsman-style detailing. Additionally, Scrabble School remains located on its original two-acre rural parcel.

The period of significance for Scrabble School extends from 1921 when construction on the school began, to 1957, marking the established fifty-year mark for historic status. However, the school continued to be used as an African-American school until 1966. The school remained open as a desegregated public school until 1967. Scrabble School has stood vacant since its closure, allowing the school and its architectural finishes to remain intact.

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**Historical Background**

*Early Education in Rappahannock County*

Throughout the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, prosperous rural-farm properties throughout Virginia often included school buildings where children were taught lessons by private tutors. These buildings were often referred to as “field schools” due to their usual establishment on an unused field parcel. While most of the county’s private schools were for the education of white children, a number of slaves and free African Americans associated with the farms were probably educated there, at the discretion of the landowner, despite laws against the education of slaves. Private academies and field schools were the most popular early forms of education outside of the family in Rappahannock County. The Slate Mills Academy, believed to be the earliest school in the county, was established in the early 1800s, although many farms established their own private schools without written records.<sup>1</sup> Private schools were known to be located at Greenfield (078-0015), Meadow Grove (078-0059), Oak Hill (078-0098), Glen Eyrie (078-0114), San Jacinto (078-0135), Hawthorn (078-0142), Belle Meade Farm (078-5068), and Little Eldon Farm (078-5131, circa 1870), among others.<sup>2</sup> A third school type was the church-related school, which included the Old School Church (078-0110) in Rappahannock County.

According to *An Architectural Survey of Rappahannock County, Virginia*, the Literary Fund for the education of the poor was created by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1809. The fund provided that “all escheats, confiscations, and forfeitures of the Commonwealth should become the property of this fund, and that all military fines should also be used by this same fund for the education of the poor.” However, this program again was aimed solely at the education of white Virginians.<sup>3</sup> In 1829, a legislative act extended that initial idea to include all students (white), but the plan remained primarily for the poor, with private schools remaining the primary source of education for the majority of students. No schools are known to have been constructed in Rappahannock County using these funds.

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Rappahannock County was originally part of Culpeper County, and its current boundaries were established in 1833. According to the non-population census records from 1840, the first time the county was officially listed as separate from Culpeper, during this period Rappahannock County's total county population was 9,257 persons, of which 3,663 were slaves and 287 were free colored persons. The records also reveal that nine primary and common schools were located in the county, although there are no numbers given for the number of students attending these schools.

In 1836, the Board of School Commissioners was incorporated to supervise the public school system. Some other early antebellum-period private schools in Rappahannock County included the Washington Academy (1834), which is now known as Rabbit Gum (322-0011-0078), the Washington Female Academy (1849), the Clover Hill Boy's School (circa 1850-1860), and the Wilson Branch Academy in Flint Hill (circa 1850). In 1840, U.S. non-population census records reveal that there were three academies and fifteen public schools educating 453 students, with segregated white and black schools.<sup>4</sup> The 1850 census also shows that 437 students were attending thirteen public schools, and thirty pupils attended two private academies with fifteen total schools throughout the county.<sup>5</sup> These schools appear to have all been one-room schoolhouses, as the number of teachers employed countywide was equal to that of the schools. However, despite the early establishment of schools, Rappahannock County still had 428 free persons unable to read or write at that time. Census records after 1850 do not analyze schools.

In 1856, the Board of School Commissioners established eleven school districts in the county. While the county's education system was beginning to be modernized, schools continued to exist in private homes, including the Lucy Wood house in Sperryville, Oak Hill, Greenfield, San Jacinto, Eldon Farm, the Spalding House in Flint Hill, and Glen Eyrie, among others. The Blue Ridge Institute School was located in the Miller-Spalding House (078-5018-0003). Many of these structures are no longer standing, but the one-room schoolhouse at Meadow Grove (078-0059), constructed in the middle part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

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and the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century one-room schoolhouse at Belle Meade Farm (078-5068), survive and are examples of the later rural farm-based schoolhouse.

In 1860, the General Assembly abolished the Literary Fund in the lead up to the Civil War, with all remaining monies going to the state's military. By 1870, emancipation had led to the establishment of multiple African-American public schools. While the number of white schools only increased by one, seven African-American public schools are listed by 1870. Many of these were "old field" schools that were converted to public schools.

Reports for the Virginia Superintendent of Public Education reveal a picture of the state of the county's public schools in 1900.<sup>6</sup> Of the 1,798 students in Rappahannock County, 636 were African American. Of those, an average of 304 African-American students attended school daily. Each teacher taught approximately 25 students monthly, the average age being 11.2 years. The report shows that no textbooks were supplied to African Americans by the state, evidencing the lower standard of education provided the African Americans in the segregated system.

In 1906, the Mann Hill School Bill was passed, expanding public education to the high school level. Responding to the bill, the Washington High School (322-0011-0115) was established in 1908, followed by the 1909 Sperryville School (078-5098) and Woodville School (demolished by a tornado in 1929), and the Flint Hill School (078-5018-0008). However, this public education system still remained the domain of white pupils and African-American students were relegated to small, overcrowded, and dilapidated buildings. The few African-American students that went on to the high school level did not attend school in Rappahannock County and had to go as far as Manassas, and later Culpeper, for their education. By 1929-30, 548 African-American students were enrolled in school, with 448 attending regularly.<sup>7</sup>

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*Establishment of Rosenwald Schools*

In 1912, Sears, Roebuck and Company president Julius Rosenwald, an ardent philanthropist, initiated the largest single program benefiting public schools for African Americans in the South since the Civil War. Rosenwald's work expanded on Booker T. Washington's established Tuskegee Institute initiatives of self-help and educational advancement, which were established in Alabama in 1912. Rosenwald schools were rural educational facilities built for African-American children that were partially constructed through grants. Through his progressive educational reform program, Rosenwald "sought to use private money to leverage available public funds in order to improve the education and lives of African Americans in the South."<sup>8</sup> Rosenwald's private contributions and subsequent Julius Rosenwald Fund Rural School Building Program, which was established in 1917, motivated rural communities desiring better schools for African Americans. The Rosenwald Fund, as the program was called, was based in Tuskegee from 1917 to 1920. During these years, the program published the influential book *The Negro Rural School, and its Relation to the Community*, which provided the initial building plans for rural African-American school buildings. In 1919, Rosenwald sought advice on how to improve the Rosenwald Fund and hired Fletcher B. Dressler of Nashville to undertake an assessment of the program. In response to Dressler's recommendations, the program was completely reinvented, and in 1920, the Rosenwald Fund separated from Tuskegee and an individual office was established in Nashville, Tennessee. The Rosenwald Fund was dramatically successful and by 1928 one in every five rural schools for African-American students in the South was a Rosenwald school.

At the program's conclusion in 1932, Rosenwald's financial aid had produced 4,977 new schools, 217 teachers' homes, and 163 shop buildings in 883 counties in fifteen states. These structures represented a total investment of over \$4.3 million in direct contributions to a program that raised \$28.5 million for school construction to educate 663,615 students.<sup>9</sup> Within the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Rosenwald Fund was responsible for the construction of 367 schools. Stringent requirements to qualify for the

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matching grants were enforced, including the donation of a land parcel to the county to ensure maintenance, proof of matching funds, and the use of a Rosenwald school plan and finishes. The schools are relatively easy to identify since they were required to follow similar architectural plans consisting of approximately three similar styles, all of which include gabled or hipped roofs and large banks of windows.

There were four Rosenwald school buildings constructed in Rappahannock County, including the Scrabble School (078-5107, also known as the Woodville School) in 1921-22, the Washington School in 1923-24, the Flint Hill School in 1926-27, and the Amissville School in 1927-28. Scrabble, Amissville, and Washington utilized two-teacher plans, while Flint Hill employed a single teacher. Each school was located on the minimum two-acre parcel and ranged from \$2,500 to \$3,712 to build with the Rosenwald Fund contribution ranging from \$400 to \$800. As was typical with the Rosenwald Fund, a majority of the building costs in each case came from public contributions.

While there were only four Rosenwald-funded schools, the general form appears to have been incorporated in other non-Rosenwald schools throughout the county, including the Reager School (078-0071), the Forest Grove School (078-5081), and the rebuilt Woodville School (Woodville proposed historic district). Using the Rosenwald form for schools was common practice throughout the South after Rosenwald pioneer Fletcher B. Dresser published *American School Buildings* for the U.S. Bureau of Education. This professional approach to school architecture was based on the Rosenwald program's reevaluation in 1920. While clearly established for the advancement of African-American education, "Rosenwald schools created a visual vocabulary for southern rural schools that crossed the color line and suggested that all students could and should learn in professionally designed instructional environments."<sup>10</sup>

*Establishment of the Scrabble School by Isaiah Wallace*

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The establishment of the Scrabble School, the first modern African-American school in Rappahannock County, is credited to the efforts of Isaiah Wallace, a native Rappahannock County African American who believed “that it is through education, and education only, that the Negro can hope to take his place in the world among other races. For that reason he is doing all [he] can to bring about the wider education of the Negro.”<sup>11</sup> His life is chronicled in a WPA interview from 1940, published in *Talk About Trouble: A New Deal Portrait of Virginians in the Great Depression*.<sup>12</sup>

Born in 1876, Isaiah Wallace was one of thirteen children born to Charles Wallace, the son of a Virginia slave. Raised in Rappahannock County, near the village of Woodville on Red Oak Mountain Road, Wallace as a boy helped the family earn a living by performing various agricultural jobs, including picking blackberries, cherries, and chestnuts. This work supplemented the income of his father’s butchering business and his mother’s small ironing business. Never fully educated, Wallace did attend school sporadically beginning at age nine. Although his schooling only lasted a total of eighteen months, a lifelong love of learning was instilled in him. He initially attended a small, African-American log school near Woodville. According to Wallace’s WPA interview, the school measured fourteen feet by twenty feet and housed eighty-eight pupils, although it was rare that that many students attended at once. An African-American teacher named John T. Williams led the lessons. Wallace recalled that “They just all stood all ‘round the walls. The benches were made out of slabs and didn’t have backs to ‘em. There were four grown people there but they had to pay a dollar a month to go.”<sup>13</sup>

During his tenure at the public African-American school, Wallace went to work for a Mrs. Belle Mason whom he “learned [the] most from,” being sent to school for three months during the year.<sup>14</sup> Wallace recalls that “She made me study my lessons every day with her children.”<sup>15</sup> After three years of working for Mason, Wallace later worked for Mr. John Butler, following the same schooling routine of three months of study per year while continuing to work on the farm. At this time, he attended a slightly larger



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school taught by a “a one-legged white man.”<sup>16</sup> Butler’s wife, Lucy, helped him with his studies at home, including the subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. He then worked for Mr. Billy Mason, the brother-in-law, of “his beloved Mrs. Belle Mason who taught him so much.”<sup>17</sup> At the end of his third reader, he left Rappahannock County for work in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he had an uncle who helped him find a job shoveling coal. Laid off during an economic depression, Wallace left the city for work on a rural farm before moving to Ohio to work in a livery stable. He later worked for the railroad in West Virginia before returning to Rappahannock when his sister fell ill. Between working on numerous local farms, he also spent time in Newport, Rhode Island, and in the lime kilns of West Virginia, choosing odd jobs as they came along.

In 1901, Wallace returned to Rappahannock to marry Malinda Payton, whom he had met while working on the farm of Mr. Will Yancey. Wallace worked as a plasterer where he apprenticed with local builders prior to contracting jobs for himself. He also led the efforts in his church for the building of a new church, engaging the local white and black community to raise funds, both skills he would later embrace. At the height of his career, an accident forced him to retire from physical labor. He was successful in securing a job with the Southern Aid Insurance Company, but another economic slump once again ended his job.

Unable to labor physically, Wallace turned his energies toward his passion for making sure people of his race received an education, working to help the plight of African-American soldiers returning from World War I. Wallace says that “I kept an account of the number of dollars that the school board owed us in schools. You see a certain amount was appropriated for colored schools in Rappahannock County and for several years we didn’t have any schools at all. Well, after the war I went to work on it and [in 1919] organized a league of colored people and got them interested in getting schools for their children.”<sup>18</sup> The W.P.A. interview continues, “Some of the white people thought I was trying to start trouble between the whites and the blacks. But I wasn’t. I was just tryin’ to get schools for my people. Well, Mr. Will

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Yancey came to me one day and asked me about it. He told me what some ignorant colored folks were sayin' about me and then I explained how it was. And he said right away that he would do all he could to help us."<sup>19</sup> The matter was taken up by the school board, although there was little interest in his cause until one member, Will Cannon, asked how much money could be raised. Wallace answered "a thousand and that we already had six hundred and sixty-two in cash." The board agreed, and with their help in addition to the Rosenwald funding, the local white and black communities completed the Scrabble School in 1922 as a model school for African Americans in Rappahannock County.

After the death of his wife in 1923, Isaiah Wallace married Mary "Lila" Dangerfield, a local school teacher and education activist. Well-educated at Manassas and the Petersburg Normal School, Mary Wallace shared her husband's desire to raise the educational opportunities for local African Americans. She had previously helped a community build a school in the Culpeper town of Homeland, utilizing available money from the Jeanes Fund, a similar early 20<sup>th</sup>-century initiative established to benefit rural African-American education.<sup>20</sup> Together, the Wallaces also raised community support for the first Rosenwald school in Culpeper, prompted by the deplorable conditions at the school in Eldorado where Lila taught and in the town where they lived.

Although they continued to fight for community supported education, all efforts were not as successful. Isaiah Wallace recalls that he "tried to start leagues at Jeffersonton, Rixeyville, Alanthus, Buena, Norman, and Brandy, but the people would not work together."<sup>21</sup> In the W.P.A. interview, Wallace recalls his understanding of the importance of education. He states that "I didn't go to school much myself but I've taught myself a lot since. I've learned a lot from Lila since we've been married. And I've got some of it myself from reading. But if I had had a better education, say even just what I could get in the grades, I would have had a chance to get a better job in Pittsburgh when I went there as a boy. My uncle could have got me a place on the police force or carrying mail. Then you didn't have to have so much schooling

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as you do now. But I just didn't have the education and I had to just take any kind of job I could get and keep doing that.”<sup>22</sup> In a similar W.P.A. interview with Mary Wallace, she recalls her husband's efforts at securing schools with Rosenwald funds. She says “I want you to know that Isaiah Wallace is the one that did it. Yes, sir, he is the founder of that school.”<sup>23</sup>

*Scrabble School, 1922-1967*

The Scrabble School was constructed in 1921-22, soon after the Rosenwald Fund moved from Tuskegee to Nashville. After a comprehensive review and professional overhaul of the Rosenwald program, the reinvented Nashville-based program was launched to construct “as nearly as possible *model* school buildings... It is our earnest desire that hereafter each new school building will be a model from every point of view of what a good country school should be.”<sup>24</sup> The resulting archetype for the program, *Community School Plans*, was published in 1921 with the Scrabble School beginning construction the same year. The revised plan included a number of innovation reform ideals not fully addressed during the original Rosenwald period, expressing the conscious shift from building better schools to building model schools.<sup>25</sup> Under the leadership of Fletcher B. Dressler and Samuel L. Smith, the reinvented program included lighting, sanitation, and ventilation specifications, including specific building orientation plans with prescribed window “breeze window” sizes and types, room uses, as well as construction methods, color schemes, and furnishing requirements. These general innovations are described at length in the Multiple Property nomination.

The Scrabble School was funded and constructed as a two-teacher Community School plan, which is representative of about fifty-percent of the Rosenwald schools constructed in Virginia. Funding for the school, which totaled \$3,225, was primarily raised by the local community of black and white citizens. The funding included a standard \$800 Rosenwald contribution, \$1,100 raised by the black community, \$125 by white contributors, and \$1,200 worth of public contribution.<sup>26</sup> The local building campaign's

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self-help initiatives tied the schools, including Scrabble, to the local community. The two-acre parcel of land required for a two-room school was donated by the Grant family, as stipulated by the Rosenwald Fund. While regional names were assigned by the Rosenwald program, the local community often gave the school a more community-based name. According to *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, “Black southerners integrated the completed building into the African American landscape by naming the school.”<sup>27</sup> Scrabble School, recorded in the Rosenwald Archives at Fisk University as the Woodville School, is one such example where the greater Woodville community was not as closely aligned with the heart of the school and the name was changed vernacularly to Scrabble School, reflecting the small hamlet where the school stood.

The Scrabble School was constructed on a grassy rise that was wooded to the rear. The school was centrally located with two privies to the rear, a circular gravel drive, a grassy lawn, and dirt playing fields. Flower garden borders enhanced the aesthetics and contributed to the curriculum. Constructed in a modified form of the Two-Teacher Community School Plan 20-A, the Scrabble School interior is almost identical to the plan. The exterior differs slightly, with its central shed-roofed entrance accessing a common interior vestibule rather than having two separate exterior entries. Another slight difference is that the school does not face directly to the east or west, but was constructed facing southwest. Scrabble boasted two interior classrooms with a central accordion divider that could be opened and closed according to specific needs. The prescribed large banks of windows extended across the rear, or northeast, elevation allowing for maximized natural light and ventilation. Although not extensively stylistic or decorative, the Scrabble School, and Rosenwald schools of the period in general, included Craftsman detailing in the design. Large eave brackets, exposed rafter tails, and Gothic-arched, gable-peak ventilation “breeze windows” were stylistic elements included in the plan.

Although few written records of the Scrabble School survive, an overwhelming majority of the day-to-day

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function and importance of the school can be gleaned from recollections of Scrabble School alumni. The Scrabble School Preservation Foundation has been instrumental in undertaking an oral history project, although the project is currently ongoing. Other vital documentation tools have included the intact physical evidence, archival newspaper articles, and a summation of School Board minutes.<sup>28</sup>

Scrabble School was a graded school serving the first through seventh grades. The first through third grades occupied one classroom, while the fourth through seventh grades filled the other. Class size varied greatly by grade and year, with some grades having as few as one student at times. Individual grades were organized by rows inside the classroom with small shared tables set up for subjects and activities including science class and the library, where all grades in the room would participate. Students formed numerous committees to help with the organization of such a varied array of learning levels. Some students fondly recalled the integration of grade levels not as a detriment, but rather as an extension of the school's instilled camaraderie, with students greatly benefiting from their association with the academics of older children. Students also fondly recall the advantage of the one-on-one teaching methods and the benefit of small classrooms, despite the inequality of the public school system.

African-American students from throughout the southern part of Rappahannock County attended this small two-classroom school from 1922 until desegregation of county schools occurred in 1966. Scrabble School replaced dilapidated school buildings that had previously been used. Many of the students walked a number of miles, as no public bus transportation was available to African Americans. Additionally, white schools were often much closer to the homes of many children.

Recollections from former students are overwhelmingly similar in their descriptions of a typical day, which began at nine in the morning with a full-school assembly, accordion doors open, with a devotional including the singing of religious and patriotic hymns and the reading of scriptures. Early generation

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students even sang a school song entitled “Daily Scrabble,” whose lyrics included “Day at Scrabble School, where we work, sing, and pray and be happy every day.”

Although basic reading, writing, and arithmetic were included in the curriculum, the schools also instituted vocational and industrial activities, including home economics, chair-caning, and overall good citizenship. An outside teacher, during the early years of the school, would teach domestic arts, including sewing, to the girls, and industrial arts, including carpentry, to the boys on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Students were assigned daily tasks in school upkeep that ranged from scrubbing and oiling the wood floors, to dusting the chalkboard erasers, to cleaning up the grounds, to bringing in water and wood. Agricultural in nature, Rappahannock County did not emphasize gardening or farming, although flower garden upkeep was part of the daily chores, according to some students’ memories.

Physical activity was another area of emphasis, with both girls’ and boys’ ball/playing fields on the school grounds; boys’ fields were on the lower left and girls’ on the upper right of the property. A community-based school in every regard, parents were highly involved in the entire educational process, with many actively involved in the PTA and fund-raising efforts. Teachers and parents organized “soup days” where children were given a hot lunch weekly, in contrast to the bagged lunches students usually brought from home. Although the schools often lacked in available resources, including books and materials, students recall getting a good education despite the dual system of education for white and black children. Parents were responsible for providing money for books, with used books and shared materials the norm. Requirements for the Rosenwald funding included that the county, who was given the land, be responsible for the maintenance of the school building. Part of this maintenance included the existing stucco, which was added to the exterior of the school in 1932.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the daily school curriculum, Scrabble School also served as a local community center, again

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reinforcing the importance of the school in the daily lives of Rappahannock's African-American population. Newspaper notices from the time reveal that numerous fund-raising benefits, both for the school and local charities, were held monthly at the school. Funds were used for buying materials, including such items as books and a clock, as well as supporting the March of Dimes or other charities. Activities ranged from "old-time square dances" and the Virginia Reel to annual May Day festivals, as well as band performances, cakewalks, white elephant sales, annual class nights, popularity contests, turkey and chicken dinners, senior leagues, and community socials. In addition, themed festivals and programs were also frequently noted. The school was also closely aligned with the local church, serving as an extension of that strong community center. Teachers attended the church services, interacting with parents and students outside the school environment. Teachers, who often boarded at nearby homes, included Mrs. Carol Williams, who also served as the principal, Mrs. B.B. Austin (who commuted from Lynchburg weekly), Mrs. E.G. Dennis, Alma May Patron, Rev. Lomax, Mrs. Beam, Mr. I.W. Brown, Mrs. Spicer, Mrs. Lyons, and Mrs. Anna Green, who was a Jeanes Fund supervisor that taught domestic and industrial arts. Although all students did not attend high school, a large public African-American high school, George Washington Carver High School, was constructed in Culpeper County in 1948. The large regional high school served Rappahannock, Culpeper, Orange, Madison, and Greene Counties.

Although few in number, additional changes to Scrabble School did occur, as documented in Rappahannock County's School Board minutes. In 1943, Scrabble was reduced to one teacher, although the following year enrollment rose with Sperryville and Peola students consolidated to Scrabble. By 1958, there were 180 black students attending four graded schools in the county. Plumbing was integrated into the school in 1961 when a bathroom was added to the rear of the building. After the Rappahannock County schools were desegregated, Scrabble School was briefly used for one term 1967-1968 for white and black first grade students, while a new school in Washington was being constructed. Even during this short period, Scrabble School was not considered adequate and students at Scrabble were

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bussed to Sperryville for lunch daily. The following year, in 1968, Rappahannock schools were fully integrated and Scrabble School was permanently closed. After the school's closure, the property remained unused, preserving its architectural fabric. In 1974, the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors considered demolition of the school and sale of the property. However, no action was taken and the school has remained intact.

**Future of Scrabble School**

Recent interest in the preservation of Rosenwald schools has been led by initiatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation that named them one of the nation's most endangered places. A grassroots community effort to preserve and adaptively reuse the school has been secured through the formation of the non-profit organization--The Scrabble School Preservation Foundation. According to the Foundation, the mission of the organization "is to preserve the Scrabble School and to share its legacy through educational programs."<sup>30</sup>

The impetus for the school's preservation began in the early 1990s by a notable alumnus, the late E. Franklin Warner, who envisioned the school as a vibrant community center. In November 2005, the Board of Supervisors for Rappahannock County approved the site for reuse as a center for the county's senior citizens and a heritage center. The Board of Directors of the Foundation then "conceived the plan to rehabilitate the building as the county's Senior Citizen Center, with dual use as a Heritage Center working to educate the public about the history of the school and the community it served."<sup>31</sup>

In its efforts, the Foundation has received generous grants from the Alice T. Rosenwald Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the Jesse and Rose Loeb Foundation, the Commonwealth of Virginia, supported by State Senator Mark D. Obenshain and Delegate C. Todd Gilbert, and a matching grant by the Marietta M. & Samuel Tate Morgan Jr. Foundation. Additionally, several local philanthropists have also contributed to the rehabilitation of the



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school building into a senior center. The county has also pledged site work funds. The Foundation has worked closely with the Carter G. Woodson Institute at the University of Virginia in conducting oral histories and has hired Craig Barton, a UVA professor and architect, to design the rehabilitation. High rehabilitation standards will be followed, with the retention of all of the school's intact features and finishes or replacement in kind where retention is not possible. The general floorplan will be retained with gallery and exhibit space, as well as open space, for community activities. Through this community initiative, Scrabble School is being reinvented in the same way it was originally constructed----as a locally conceived and created center of the local community.

**ENDNOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> EHT Traceries, Inc. (Laura V. Trieschmann and Jennifer B. Hallock, Principal Investigators) *Architectural Survey of Rappahannock County, Virginia*, May 2002, page 118.

<sup>2</sup> EHT Traceries, Inc. *Architectural Survey*, page 118.

<sup>3</sup> EHT Traceries, Inc. *Architectural Survey*, page 15.

<sup>4</sup> United States Census Records. *Report on the Social, Agricultural, and Manufacturing Census*, Record Group 287, National Archives at College Park, Department of the Interior, Census Office, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1840-1870.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> J.H. O'Bannon, Superintendent of Public Printing. *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia*. Richmond, VA: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1901.

<sup>7</sup> Harris Hart, Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Education of the Commonwealth of Virginia 1929-30*. Richmond, VA: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1930. p.126

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources (Bryan Clark Green). National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination for *Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)*. Richmond, Virginia, December 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle. *Preserving Rosenwald Schools*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, page 1.

<sup>10</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle. *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, page 113.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy J. Martin-Purdue and Charles Purdue. *Talk About Trouble: A New Deal Portrait of Virginians in the Great Depression*. Interview of Isaiah Wallace by Margaret Jeffries. Also on Microfilm and online at the Library of Virginia, page 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, page 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, page 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, page 10.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 6.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, page 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page 8.

<sup>24</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle. *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, page 82-83.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, page 94.

<sup>26</sup> Fisk University Archives, Nashville Tennessee. Special Collections Library. Julius Rosenwald Archive.

<sup>27</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle. *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, page 256.

<sup>28</sup> School board minutes were recorded in *Rappahannock County, Virginia History: Fact, Fiction, Foolishness, and Fairfax Story* as School Calendar by Elisabeth C. and C.E. Johnson. Orange, VA: Green Publishers, 1981. pages 229-250.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, and Notes Stucco was added to Scrabble School in 1932.

<sup>30</sup> Scrabble School Foundation website. Accessed online at [www.scrabbleschool.org](http://www.scrabbleschool.org)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Scrabble School sits on a 2.3169-acre parcel at 111 Scrabble Road/Route 626 in Rappahannock County, Virginia. It is owned by the County of Rappahannock, and the parcel is shown on County Parcel Map 50, Parcel 20. A plat of the property is recorded in Rappahannock County Deed Book 151, page 817. The property is recorded in the Rappahannock County Land Records as "Scrabble School Lot," dated April 8, 1985.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries for the Scrabble School property at 111 Scrabble Road in Rappahannock County, Virginia, are described as the 2.3169-acre property described in Rappahannock County Deed Book 151, page 817. The parcel is a portion of the original Grant family tract (plat recorded in and was given to the County for construction of a Rosenwald School). The Scrabble School has been associated with the current portion of the tract since its construction in 1921-22. The boundary includes all of the resources historically associated with the property.

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**The following information is common to all photographs:**

**Name:** Scrabble School

**Location:** 111 Scrabble Road/Route 626, Rappahannock County, Virginia

**VDHR File No.:** 078-5107

**Photographer:** Jennifer Hallock, Arcadia Preservation, LLC

**Date of Photo:** July 2006

**Location of Negatives:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

**Roll Number:** 23269

VIEW OF: Scrabble School, Primary/Southwest Elevation

NEG. NO.: 23269/26

PHOTO: 1 of 10

VIEW OF: Scrabble School Site, View looking East

NEG. NO.: 23269/2

PHOTO: 2 of 10

VIEW OF: Gable Peak Breeze Vent, SE elevation

NEG. NO.: 23269/23

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PHOTO: 3 of 10

VIEW OF: Rear/NE Elevation and Rear addition  
NEG. NO.: 23269/19  
PHOTO: 4 of 10

VIEW OF: Decorative Corner Detail, South Corner  
NEG. NO.: 23269/15  
PHOTO: 5 of 10

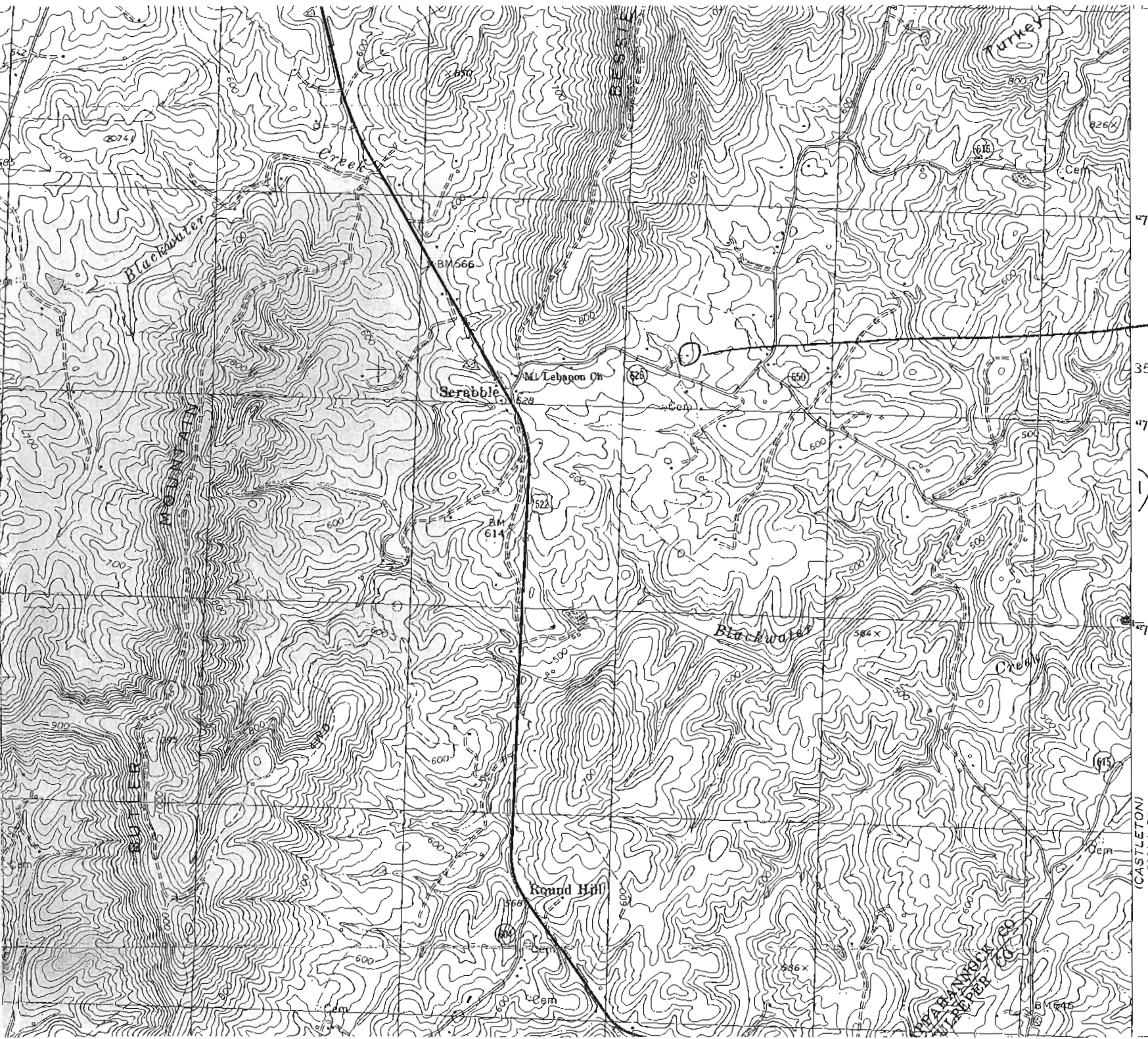
VIEW OF: Entrance Overhang, Exposed Rafter Tails and Bracket  
NEG. NO.: 23269/13  
PHOTO: 6 of 10

VIEW OF: Interior, South Corner and Southwest wall, Looking South  
NEG. NO.: 23269/7  
PHOTO: 7 of 10

VIEW OF: Interior, West Corner and Southwest wall, Looking West  
NEG. NO.: 23269/31  
PHOTO: 8 of 10

VIEW OF: Interior, Partition Wall, Looking North  
NEG. NO.: 23269/29  
PHOTO: 9 of 10

VIEW OF: Interior, Classroom, North Corner, Looking North  
NEG. NO.: 23269/6  
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